



Russian River Biological Opinion Update – April 2011

The Sonoma County Water Agency is continually planning and implementing the requirements spelled out in the Russian River Biological Opinion. To better communicate the progress and timeline of this work, the Water Agency has provided the below outline of project updates. For more detailed information about these activities, please visit www.sonomacountywater.org.

Dry Creek Demonstration Project

- Property owners in the demonstration reach met with Inter-Fluve consultants and Water Agency staff to discuss specific enhancements on their property. The 60% design document is anticipated early this month. Discussions with landowners regarding access and construction have begun, and permitting requests to regulatory agencies will be made this spring.
- An Initial Study environmental document on the demonstration project will be available for public review this month.
- A delegation of officials from the Corps and NMFS met with agency staff in late March at Warm Springs Dam to discuss the demonstration project and Corps funding.

Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement Study & Bypass Pipeline Study

- The Dry Creek habitat enhancement study is proceeding in parallel with demonstration project work. The study is anticipated to be completed in summer 2011.
- The Dry Creek bypass pipeline and Dry Creek Habitat Enhancement draft feasibility studies will be released this month.
- The Water Agency, National Marine Fisheries Service, Department of Fish & Game and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working with consultants, ESSA, to develop clear success measures for habitat enhancement. The plan should be completed by July 2011.
- Three creek restoration projects are slated for construction this summer and fall: Crane Creek, Grape Creek, and Wallace Creek – all in the Dry Creek watershed.

Wohler Pond Modification Project

- The National Marine Fisheries Service has approved design plans and the Water Agency has received all construction permits. Project implementation will begin in early summer 2011.

Mirabel Screen and Fish Ladder Replacement

- The Water Agency has received confirmation that it will be awarded a \$255,000 California Department of Fish and Game Fishery Restoration Grant for design of the project. Release of those funds will likely not occur until June. In anticipation, the Water Agency has selected a design consultant (HDR), as a result of an RFQ process, which will start work as soon as permitted under the terms of the grant agreement.

Russian River Estuary Management Project

- The comment period for the Project's Draft Environmental Impact Report closed on February 14, with 173 comments received (many were form letters). The consultants on the project, Environmental Science Associates, anticipate the final EIR will be completed in late spring.
- The Water Agency application for a Marine Mammal Incidental Harassment Authority (IHA) was published in the Federal Registry on March 18. The IHA is a temporary permit that will allow the agency to breach the sand bar and implement the lagoon channel management plan. The comment period closes on April 18. Last year's permit required rigorous monitoring of seals and other pinnipeds (mammals with flippers) occurs year-round, before, during and after the Water Agency manages the sand bar.

Fish Flow Project

- Work is occurring internally on the preparation of the draft Environmental Impact Report for the Fish Habitat Flows and Water Rights Project. Later this year, staff will make a presentation to the Board of Directors summarizing the project status and the comments made during the scoping period.
- EIR Schedule
 - Release Draft EIR in summer 2012
 - Release Final EIR in summer 2013
 - BO requires Board to certify Final EIR by September 24, 2013
 - EIR will be prepared by Water Agency staff, with assistance from consultants on some areas of impact analysis, including recreation, socioeconomics and possibly water quality.

Interim Flow Changes

- This month the Water Agency will be filing a petition to modify minimum instream flow requirements for this summer.

Public Outreach

- The second issue of the Biological Opinion News, a new electronic publication providing short updates on studies and projects, will be released this month.
- Planning for community outreach on interim flow changes and summer estuary activities is underway.
- The Dry Creek Advisory Group will meet in early May to review the habitat enhancement and pipeline feasibility studies.